

because, paradoxically, the more we wish for it to end – with a utopian or dystopian “unveiling” of the Real – the more we fear the return of an excess of meaning and, at the same time, the loss of a lot more conventionality? For Jean Baudrillard, we are past the moment of the society of the spectacle because of the loss of all referent: this is the world of simulacra and simulation, or, as I will show in resonance with Slavoj Žižek, the world of The Matrix According to Žižek, it is our “passion for the Real” (the thrill of reality) that might also prompt us to avoid it. A post-1990s analysis of a couple of cinematic narratives from the 1990s, Andy and Larry Wachowski’s *The Matrix* and Oliver Stone’s *Natural Born Killers*, comes to support the conclusion that genuine, non-“mediated” identities can be preserved as long as, aware of the spectacle and its perils, we keep up our search for the Real.

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hypermedia that pose new cognitive demands on readers, and examines some of their implications for reading, writing, and the changing nature of communication.

W. Keith Duffy

Sound Arguments: Composing Words and Music

In the following article, I describe a pedagogy that immerses students in two kinds of composing. First, students research and write argumentative essays in a traditional academic environment; then in a digital recording studio, students reframe those arguments in a different medium by composing original abstract electronic music. This pedagogy shows students the practical and theoretical connections among two seemingly disparate processes, and it provides them with an opportunity to explore and express their positions on controversial issues in multiple mediums. As an example of how this pedagogy works, I discuss the written and musical work of four students and how they have successfully responded to this pedagogy. Two mp3 audio files accompany this manuscript.

Roy Fox

Selling STEM Education through Fears of “Others”

Much of what occurred in America after the launch of the Russian satellite, Sputnik I in 1957, can be regarded as happening all over again. The questions the wisdom of U.S. federal and state governments again “privileging” the STEM curriculum areas (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education) by proposing large expenditures of funding. Some of the primary reasons that government leaders have recently offered for such expenditures are also questioned.

Adam Freeman

Leftists considered autobiographical moves just a reflex of capitalism and a further commodification of the self. The New Historicism was a “profoundly narcissistic method,” to one such naysayer, while autobiographical criticism was, to another Lefty, just further evidence of “the pervisibility of the ideological category of the subject.” Frankly postmodern critics vigorously defended autobiography, proclaiming literature an extension of the marketplace and auction house. It is argued here that we are left with a style of criticism shorn of both elitism and political commitment alike.

Travis Vogan

“Inside Doesn’t Matter:” Ronald Reagan and American Psycho

Despite the fact that Ronald Reagan’s presidency marked America’s highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression and was riddled with scandals like the 1986 Iran Contra affair, his approval rating when he left office was the highest for any President since Franklin Roosevelt. The essay uses the film *American Psycho* to examine this curious predicament, specifically addressing how Reagan’s image politics enabled him to maintain public approval. Building from the work of Jean Baudrillard, Lawrence Grossberg, and Brian Massumi, it investigates Reagan’s affectivity and the manner in which *American Psycho* rather hyperbolically comments on it.

Katherine Weiss

“There’s no question that this is torture!” Electrocuting Patriotic *Furiv* Sam Shepard’s *The God of Hell*

While Sam Shepard’s desperate attempt to influence the American voting public failed either to keep President George W. Bush out of office or to win the approval of theatre critics in New York or London, his play *The God of Hell* (2004) captivated the interest of renowned directors such as Kathy Burke and actors such as Ewen Bremner, Randy Quaid, and Tim Roth. Despite being rushed into production and refusing to offer its

audience positive solutions to what Shepard has called an invasion of “Republican fascism,” Shepard successfully manages to criticize American patriotism, capitalism and patriarchy through images of electric shock torture. This paper examines images of patriotism and torture, employing Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain* to argue that politically inflicted injury is both a tool used by unstable governments and a vehicle that destroys the body and family in the hopes of maintaining political power.